

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT MIKEITZ-CHANUKA · 30 KISLEV 5769 · DEC. 27, 2008 · VOL. 16 NO. 10

PARSHA INSIGHTS

YOU CAN CHECK OUT ANY TIME YOU LIKE - BUT YOU CAN NEVER LEAVE

“And behold seven other cows arose after them... and they stood next to the cows on the bank of the river. And the cows of ugly appearance ate the seven cows of beautiful and robust appearance.” (41:3,4)

Mendy fastened his seat belt obediently as the plane started its lazy descent into Heathrow. Pulling out his landing card he examined the rudimentary English script copied from the note in his pocket, which gave his local address as a house in Stamford Hill, London. Mendy had no idea where Stamford Hill might be and less the location of his temporary abode.

Mendy was not looking forward to his trip. He had never tried to raise funds before, and in the current financial situation he felt somewhat like an eager lemming, but as they say “needs must”.

Making his way to Stamford Hill Mendy found his London *pied à terre* — a totally unremarkable suburban house. Behind its mock Tudor façade, however, he was cheered to find many collectors like himself from Eretz Yisrael all heartened by a bed, a bite and warm Jewish atmosphere.

After two whole weeks of constant pounding the pavement, Mendy hadn’t succeeded in raising even the cost of his flight. And he was feeling increasingly uncomfortable taking advantage of the hospitality of his unseen host. Moreover, he had no idea how long one was allowed to stay at the house.

One day he found himself in conversation with someone in the kitchen. They commiserated with each other about the state of world economics generally, and specifically about their own difficulties. Mendy then said, “By the way, do you know how long you can stay here? It’s such won-

derful *chessed* (kindness) they do here. I don’t want to overstay my welcome.”

Unbeknownst to Mendy, the person with whom he was conversing was none other than his hidden benefactor, the owner of the house.

“I wouldn’t worry about it if I were you,” he said, “I’ve been staying here for years and no one ever says a word to me.”

Not all sleepover guests, however, have Mendy’s compunction.

There’s one guest who is very happy to make himself at home, and once he does, it’s well nigh impossible to get him to leave. First he comes to you as a ‘sleep-over’ guest, someone just passing through. If you allow him to stay, he becomes a lodger. Finally, if you don’t kick him out, he takes over, becomes the master of the house and dominates you completely.

The seven ugly cows are a representation of the negative impulse – the *yetzer hara*. First, like the cows, it *rises up*, appearing out of the distance like a wayfarer on his travels. Then it *stands next* to you, on an equal footing, like a guest sharing all the facilities of your home. Lastly, just as “*the cows of ugly appearance ate the seven cows of beautiful appearance*”, so too eventually, if you don’t stop him, the negative impulse will devour you completely.

• Based on a real-life Jewish hero and an article in the name of the *Sfas Emes* in *Mayana shel Torah*

Invitation

With great thanks to Hashem, Rabbi Sinclair invites readers of Torah Weekly to join him at the Bar Mitzvah of his son Shmuel Yebuda,

at Ohr Somyach in Jerusalem this Shabbat Chanuka; Shacharit at 7:30; Kiddush to follow and /or on Sunday evening “Zot Chanuka” at the Beit Yisrael Hall, Ezrat Torah, from 8:30 pm

PARSHA OVERVIEW

It is two years later. Pharaoh has a dream. He is unsatisfied with all attempts to interpret it. Pharaoh's wine chamberlain remembers that Yosef accurately interpreted his dream while in prison. Yosef is released from prison and brought before Pharaoh. He interprets that soon will begin seven years of abundance followed by seven years of severe famine. He tells Pharaoh to appoint a wise person to store grain in preparation for the famine. Pharaoh appoints him as viceroy to oversee the project. Pharaoh gives Yosef an Egyptian name, Tsafnat Panayach, and selects Osnat, Yosef's ex-master's daughter, as Yosef's wife. Egypt becomes the granary of the world. Yosef has two sons, Menashe and Ephraim. Yaakov sends his sons to Egypt to buy food. The brothers come before Yosef and bow to him. Yosef recognizes them but they do not recognize him. Mindful of his dreams, Yosef plays the part of an Egyptian

overlord and acts harshly, accusing them of being spies. Yosef sells them food, but keeps Shimon hostage until they bring their brother Binyamin to him as proof of their honesty. Yosef commands his servants to replace the purchase-money in their sacks. On the return journey, they discover the money and their hearts sink. They return to Yaakov and retell everything. Yaakov refuses to let Binyamin go to Egypt, but when the famine grows unbearable, he accedes. Yehuda guarantees Binyamin's safety, and the brothers go to Egypt. Yosef welcomes the brothers lavishly as honored guests. When he sees Binyamin he rushes from the room and weeps. Yosef instructs his servants to replace the money in the sacks, and to put his goblet inside Binyamin's sack. When the goblet is discovered, Yosef demands Binyamin become his slave as punishment. Yehuda interposes and offers himself instead, but Yosef refuses.

ISRAEL Forever

SURVIVING THE LEAN YEARS

As Israel and the entire world brace themselves for surviving the current financial crisis, it is worthwhile reflecting on what we learn in this week's Torah portion about the "seven lean years" which were destined for Egypt after seven years of prosperity.

The situations are of course quite different. Our generation did not have the benefit of a ruler's prophetic dream and an interpreter like Yosef. But perhaps there is

one lesson we can learn from what happened then. Our Sages tell us that the famine in Egypt came to an end after only two years because of the merit of our Patriarch Yaakov who came there with his family.

Even if we cannot aspire to the spiritual power of a patriarch we can do our utmost to improve our ways and find favor in the eyes of Heaven so that we can survive lean years and enjoy prosperity in Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND- THE PLACES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

ESHTAOL – ECHOES OF SHIMSHON

A little over a mile west of Shimshon Junction is Eshtaol. The junction's name echoes what is written (*Shoftim* 13:25) about the great judge and warrior: "The spirit of G-d began to move in him in the



camp of Dan, between Tzorah and Eshtaol."

There is a tradition that Dan, the son of the Patriarch Yaakov, from whom Shimshon was descended, is buried in Eshtaol.

חנוכה שמחה
Happy Chanukah

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What did the fat cows being eaten symbolize?
2. How did Pharaoh's recollection of his dream differ from Nevuchadnetzar's recollection of his dream?
3. What was significant about the fact that Pharaoh dreamed repeatedly?
4. What does "Tsafnat Panayach" mean?
5. What happened to the Egyptians' grain that was stored in anticipation of the famine?
6. What did Yosef require the Egyptians to do before he would sell them grain?
7. Did Yaakov and his family still have food when he sent his sons to Egypt? If yes, why did he send them?
8. What prophetic significance lay in Yaakov's choice of the word "redu" — "descend" (and not "lechu" — "go")?
9. Why does the verse say "Yosef's brothers" went down to Egypt (and not "Yaakov's sons")?
10. When did Yosef know that his dreams were being fulfilled?
11. Under what pretext did Yosef accuse his brothers of being spies?
12. Why did the brothers enter the city through different gates?
13. Who was the interpreter between Yosef and his brothers?
14. Why did Yosef specifically choose Shimon to put in prison?
15. How does the verse indicate that Shimon was released from prison after his brothers left?
16. What was Yaakov implying when he said to his sons: "I am the one whom you bereaved."?
17. How did Reuven try to persuade Yaakov to send Binyamin to Egypt?
18. How long did it take for Yaakov and family to eat all the food that the brothers brought back from Egypt? Give the answer in terms of travel time.
19. How much more money did the brothers bring on their second journey than they brought on the first journey? Why?
20. How did the brothers defend themselves against the accusation of theft?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 41:4 - That all the joy of the plentiful years would be forgotten. (Not that the good years would provide food for the bad years.)
2. 41:8 - Pharaoh remembered the contents of his dream but didn't know its meaning. Nevuchadnetzar forgot even the contents of his dream.
3. 41:32 - It showed that the seven good years would start immediately.
4. 41:45 - He who explains things that are hidden and obscure.
5. 41:55 - It rotted.
6. 41:55 - Become circumcised.
7. 42:1 - Yes, but he sent them because he did not want to cause envy in the eyes of those who did not have food.
8. 42:2 - It hinted to the 210 years that the Jewish people would be in Egypt: The word "redu" has the numerical value of 210.
9. 42:3 - Because they regretted selling Yosef and planned to act as brothers by trying to find him and ransom him at any cost.
10. 42:9 - When his brothers bowed to him.
11. 42:12 - They entered the city through 10 gates rather than through one gate.
12. 42:13 - To search for Yosef throughout the city.
13. 42:23 - His son Menashe.
14. 42:24 - Because he was the one who cast Yosef into the pit and the one who said, "Here comes the dreamer." Alternatively, to separate him from Levi, as together they posed a danger to him.
15. 42:24 - The verse says Shimon was bound "in front of their eyes," implying that he was bound only while in their sight.
16. 42:36 - That he suspected them of having slain or sold Shimon, and that they may have done the same to Yosef.
17. 42:37 - He said, "Kill my two sons if I fail to bring back Binyamin."
18. 43:2,10 - Twice the travel time to and from Egypt.
19. 43:12 - Three times as much, in order to repay the money they found in their sacks and to buy more even if the price had doubled.
20. 44:8 - They said, "We returned the money we found in our sacks; can it be that we would steal?"

- Four categories of responsibility for damage caused by one's failure to prevent damage and their sub-categories
- Which sub-category has rules other than its category
- Sources for the various types of damagers
- The special category of damage caused by animal kicking stones while walking in public thoroughfare
- Conflicting views of which damagers are mentioned in the *mishna*
- The additional categories listed by Rabbi Oshia and Rabbi Chiya
- The Sage Rava's explanation of why it was necessary for the *mishna* to list all four categories
- The damager not mentioned in the *mishna* but implied
- Whether the damager pays from the best of his fields or according to the best of the victim's properties or the best of his own
- When a landowner is entitled to receive tithe for the poor
- Whether evaluation of damager's property for payment depends on what is his own best or what is generally considered best
- The order of collection of a victim of damage and of a creditor
- Whether selling a field with a guarantee or without one entitles the seller to contest the confiscation of that property

THE POOR RICH MAN

How is it possible for a man who owns property to be entitled to receive money from the tithe reserved for the poor? The rule is that if one owns two hundred zuz he is not considered poor and is not entitled to any of the agricultural gifts that the Torah awards to the poor.

But what if that person owns houses or fields worth this sum but is unable to sell them for the sum he needs in order to support himself?

The halacha is that in such a case he may be given the tithe reserved for the poor up until half the amount of two

hundred zuz and be required to sell his property at a substantial loss to cover the other half.

The reason given by the *gemara* for this is that the value of his property is really 200 zuz if he waits until the month of Nissan when he can sell his fields for that amount. His desperate search for cash half a year before that compels him to sell at the lower price. Unlike the truly poor man who lacks even the potential to own 200 zuz and can therefore receive in one gift even a thousand zuz in tithes for the poor, this fellow, because of his potential to sell for 200 zuz, is only entitled to help up until the half of what his property would eventually be worth.

• *Bava Kama 7a*

What the SAGES Say

"A man is responsible to guard his body so that it should not cause any damage (even involuntarily)."

• *Rabbi Avahu - Bava Kama 4a*

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IN THE LIGHT OF THE SLIVERY MOON

From: Rebecca Mark in NYC

Dear Rabbi,

Where does the halacha for kiddush levana (blessing for the New Moon) come from and have there been any Torah authorities who were opposed to it? Also, why do we bless one another during the service with 'shalom aleichem'?

Dear Peter,

The source for blessing the new moon comes from the Talmud (Sanhedrin 42a). To my knowledge, there have never been any Torah authorities that opposed it.

I assume that your question is based on the misconception that sanctifying the moon bears a resemblance to moon-worship. This is an absolute fallacy. We are not worshipping the moon; we are praising G-d for His marvelous creations, including the miracle of the moon's monthly rebirth. One of the principal ways to recognize G-d is through His works; the immutable monthly cycle of the moon is one of the more visible aspects of G-d's masterful creation.

Additionally, we see the monthly rebirth of the moon as a symbol of G-d's promise to overthrow those who seek to destroy us and ultimately redeem the Jewish People and make us complete and in a state of peace.

It is for this reason that in the course of *kiddush levana*, we pray for the downfall of the enemies of the Jewish People. In particular, we quote the verse from the 'Song at the Red Sea': "May dread and fear befall them, they should be silent like stone...". Since this verse does not specify who "them" refers to, we therefore turn to the people standing nearby and say "Shalom Aleichem" to show that they are not included among those whose downfall we seek.

Another explanation for blessing others at that time is as follows: After you say a blessing on an apple, you take a bite of the apple. So too, after blessing G-d for the moon and its light, you benefit from the moon's light by using it to recognize your friends and wish them well. This latter reason is also why some have the custom to separate the tzitzit at the conclusion of *kiddush levana* – to use the moon's light in order to enhance a mitzvah.

Perhaps both ideas are connected: After praying for the 'dis-empowering' of our enemies, we untangle the tzitzit as if to show our anticipation of the day we shall no longer be entangled and tied down by our foes but rather shall be liberated and unfettered to fulfill the *mitzvot* in the full light of G-d.

Sources:

- Rema, Orach Chaim 426:2
- Magen Avraham 426:11
- Megilla 3a and Tosafot "Chayshinan"

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WARNING THE BUYER

Question: Someone is interested in purchasing the apartment in which I live. I have been very forthright in informing him about any of the minor shortcomings of my home but have been hesitant in letting him know that one of the reasons for my selling is that the immediate neighbors are very difficult to live with. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: In *Pirkei Avot* we are advised to avoid bad neighbors. This is extremely practical counsel because the wrong kind of neighbors can be not only spiritually detrimental but

can also make life unpleasant.

One of the commentaries calls attention to the fact that the term used in this advice is *harchek* rather than *titrachek*. The latter term would have meant “distance yourself” while the former suggests that you have an obligation to keep others away from such a pitfall.

You must spell out to the buyer the problems you have encountered which may seem to him to be soluble or tolerable. It is then up to him to decide whether he wants to go through with the deal.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

JUDGING FAVORABLY SAVES A LIFE

Answering a frantic knock on his door, the man renowned for his hospitality discovered a young man who identified himself as a deserter from the Russian army seeking refuge for the night. Ignoring the danger involved in aiding such a fugitive he gave him a bed for the night.

When morning came the young man was gone. Also missing were all the valuables of the family. Circumstances seemed to point to the deserter as the culprit and the family urged the host to report the incident to the local police.

He refused to believe that his guest was guilty and simply swallowed his loss. Some time later a local Jew who had

been taken into temporary police custody overheard a conversation between some non-Jewish prisoners about how they had pulled off such a successful robbery in the home of the generous host. This was reported to the police and to the host whose faith was vindicated.

Years later this host was serving as a *shochet* in South America when he was approached by a stranger who identified himself as his erstwhile guest. When he discovered that there had been a robbery and that he might be suspected, he fled in order to avoid a police investigation that could lead to a firing squad for desertion. A favorable judgment on the part of the host had saved his life.

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